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2009 COUNTRY BRAND INDEX

Top Country Brands

List

Graph

Brand Strength

List

Graph

Region Rankings

List

Graph

Associations

List

Graph

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Top 10 Country Brands

01  **USA**

02  **CANADA**

03  **AUSTRALIA**

04  **NEW ZEALAND**

05  **FRANCE**

06  **ITALY**

07  **JAPAN**

08  **UK**

09  **GERMANY**

10  **SPAIN**

2009 | ▼

OVERVIEW

COUNTRY BRANDING

RANKINGS

CALCULATOR

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Evaluation of existing rankings and assessment of the country brand

JUAN CARLOS BELLOSO

In today's society, countries, regions and cities compete to attract visitors, residents, companies, investment, talent, international organisations, big events, etc., which are crucial for their economic, social and cultural development. To do so, they need to find appropriate strategies allowing them to compete successfully in an increasingly global and cross-related, complex and competitive environment. This is why it is crucial to identify and analyse the most stringent and influential country indices and rankings explaining best the actual and perceived position of a country. This allows to create an own measurement and assessment system of the positioning and the value of a country brand, thus allowing to know at any time its real position and helping public and private managers take strategic decisions.



International country indices and rankings

One main goal of any country needs to be to know the position it takes at a global scale at any time and follow its development in order to define the best competitiveness and international positioning strategies and if applicable to make corrections according to the evolution of this positioning.

One main goal of any country needs to be to know the position it takes at a global scale at any time and follow its development in order to define the best competitiveness strategies.

There are numerous indicators, rankings and classification tables of countries, regions and cities in all areas: competitiveness and economic development (Global Competitiveness Index CGI by the [World Economic Forum](#)), living standard (Human Development Index HDI by the [United Nations](#)), appeal for business and foreign investment (Trust Index by AT Kearney), talent and human capital, tourist appeal (Travel and Tourism Competitive Index TTCI by the World Economic Forum), international recognition, image, dangers (like those by the [World Health Organisation](#)), corruption (Corruption Perception Index CPI by [Transparency International](#)), sustainability, etc.

These indices and rankings come from different, more or less scientific or academic sources and are based on several criteria. They all have a different impact on both media and the public opinion, for instance for decision-taking, according to who makes the index or ranking and its methodological solidity.

Also, indices can be categorised according to what they measure, the actual situation of a country or the perception different audiences from various areas have of it.

The reputation or image of a country (brand) can be affected according to the position it takes in certain indices, rankings or classification tables, especially those with a high degree of notoriety among media and decision-takers, no matter the organisation or agency making the ranking and its quality or methodological or scientific stringency that may possibly distort reality.

The goal of this article is not to assess the different existing country indices but to show their existence and the need of knowing and assessing them so they can be helpful in setting out and implement the most appropriate policies.

It is important to know about the existence, quality and impact of the different indices and rankings as it allows to set up specific strategies and actions to have an impact on them.

In order to assess existing country indices and rankings, we can classify them according to criteria such as their scope (competitiveness, quality of life, human capital, image, connectivity, etc.), source (academia, consulting, media, industry, international organisation), methodology (quantitative, qualitative, mixed), methodological quality or stringency in its elaboration and finally its media, academic and social impact. It is important to know about the existence, quality and impact of the different indices and rankings as it allows to set up specific strategies and actions to have an impact on them.

Main country brand perception indices

No matter the aforementioned, there are specific indices measuring the relative position of the different countries based on the perception by certain audiences. The most used and best known country brand perception indices are the [Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index](#) (NBI) and the [FutureBrand Country Brand Index](#) (CBI).

The Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (NBI)

The Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Index was developed in 2005 by Simon Anholt as a system to assess the image and reputation of countries throughout the world as well as a tool to follow up their profiles as they develop, raise and drop in this index. It is currently the only existing analytic country brand index. The Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index measures the strength and quality of each country's brand image, combining the six following items:

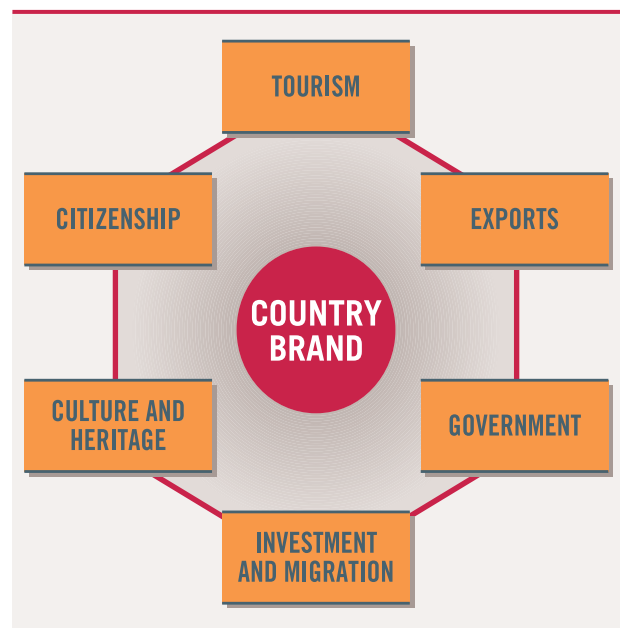
- ▶ **Exports.** It determines the public image of goods and services in each country and in how far consumers proactively seek or avoid products according to their country of origin.
- ▶ **Government.** It measures public opinion on the degree of competence and honesty of the national government with a description of individual beliefs as well as the perception of its commitment with global matters like democracy, justice, poverty and environment.
- ▶ **Culture and heritage.** It shows the global perceptions of historical and cultural heritage in every country as well as appreciation for its contemporary culture, including cinema, music, art, sports and literature.
- ▶ **Citizenship.** It measures the reputation of the population in terms of competence, education, open-mindedness, friendliness and other qualities as well as the perceived degree of potential hostility and discrimination.
- ▶ **Tourism.** It measures the interest in visiting a country and its wealth in natural resources and tourist attractions.
- ▶ **Investment and migration.** It determines the ability of countries to attract residents, workers or students and shows how people perceive their economic and social situation.

The brand of each country based on these six criteria is captured in the hexagon and shows a

visual representation of the total index. This tool provides a consistent framework to compare countries in relation with the key factors affecting the reputation of a nation, so it can be clearly seen where each country brand is located and why. Beyond analysing the index, the hexagon provides an assessment of the position of the country and is an effective tool to manage its image or reputation at global level. The ten first countries in the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brand Index in 2008 and 2009 are shown on Table 1.

Exports determine the public image of goods and services in each country and in how far consumers proactively seek or avoid products according to their origin.

Gràfic 1. Marca de país



Font: The Nation Brand Hexagon 2000 © Simon Anholt.

▲ Simon Anholt developed the only existing analytic country brand index.

The FutureBrand Country Brand Index (CBI)

The Country Brand Index (CBI) made every year by FutureBrand consulting firm takes the opinion of experts, statistics and quantitative data and assesses 29 brand attributes and 7 brand strength criteria of 102 countries. It further contains a wide variety of trends and viewpoints. The perception of roughly 3000 international business travellers and tourists from nine countries (United States, United Kingdom, China, Australia, Japan, Brazil, United Arab Emirates, Germany and Russia) and a panel of 47 experts from areas such as tourism, development, politics and academia was taken to complete the 2009 ranking.

The Country Brand Index (CBI) results for the first ten months of 2009 can be seen on Table 2.

Both indices are interesting and many countries use them to analyse their position and evolution over time regarding different variables allowing to take strategic decision for their development and their brand.

As has been said before, the truly important for each country is to identify and assess the indices helping to better understand the relative position in other countries while setting the most appro-

priate strategies and policies to improve its position and lastly to compete successfully in an increasingly global and competitive world.

Both indices are interesting and many countries use them to analyse their position and evolution over time regarding different variables.

Brand assessment

Generally speaking, there are two main perspectives related with the value of a brand:

- ▶ **The consumer perspective**, in which the brand value is determined by the degree of awareness of the brand by the consumer as well as the perspectives of the latter on brand quality, originality, etc.
- ▶ **The financial perspective**, by which an economic value is intended to be associated to the brand.

According to Keller (2003), a brand has a high value when it has a high degree of awareness and familiarity, while causing strong, positive and unique associations in the consumer mindset.

Table 1. Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index

2009	2008
1 United States	Germany
2 France	France
3 Germany	United Kingdom
4 United Kingdom	Canada
5 Japan	Japan
6 Italy	Italy
7 Canada	United States
8 Switzerland	Switzerland
9 Australia	Australia
10 Spain, Sweden	Sweden

Source: Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index 2008 and 2009..

Table 2. Country Brand Index (CBI)

2009
1 United States
2 Canada
3 Australia
4 New Zealand
5 France
6 Italy
7 Japan
8 United Kingdom
9 Germany
10 Spain

Source: 2009 FutureBrand Country Brand Index (CBI).

According to Aaker (1991), the value of a brand represents «the whole of assets and liabilities related with a brand, its name and symbols, which is added to or subtracted from the value provided by a product or service to a company and/or its customers and consumers».

From a financial perspective, there is right now no agreement on the methodology to assess brands, but techniques based on historical costs, reposition cost or future benefits are used instead.

The best known brand assessment method is probably that of the world's top hundred brands done annually by the Interbrand consulting firm using a technique based on future cash flow (future benefits).

Nation brand equity

From a country perspective, the relevance of brand financial assessment needs to be determined. However, the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Index included an economic assessment attempt aimed at giving an idea of the actual contribution of the country brand to the national economy. In any case, it is crucial to understand the brand value concept and which its key components or assets are.

The nation brand equity (NBEQ) can be defined as the tangible and intangible, internal and external assets and liabilities of a nation.

According to this model made by Keith Dinnie, the internal and external nation brand equity sources are the following:

► Internal assets (liabilities)

– Inborn: durable items of national identity (iconography, landscape, culture).

– General: driven from specific efforts to create a healthy environment encouraging nation brand equity development and creation (internal commitment, support to arts, degree of loyalty).

► External assets (liabilities)

– Indirect: experienced through references rather than direct experience (perception of a country image, external representation in folk culture).

– Disseminated: tangible projections of the country brand abroad (brand ambassadors, expatriates, brand exports).

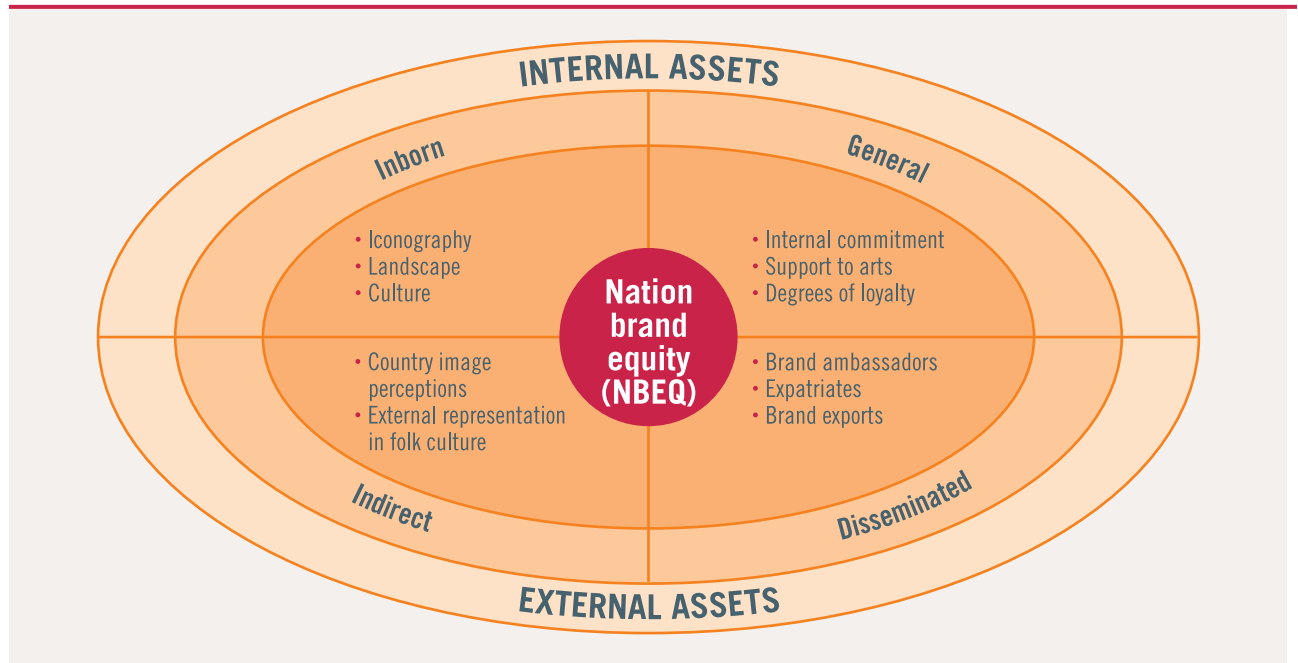
Inborn assets are the durable items of national identity, which make a powerful and true means of differentiation for a country brand. These items are unique and cannot be copied; they represent the sort of distinctive attributes based on which any sort of brand is created.

Generated assets do not occur automatically but they need to be created consciously. Securing internal commitment to a country brand (by public authorities, the private industry and the population) is a key aspect to project its image that has been often set aside. Also, support to arts can stimulate cultural life of a nation and improve its reputation.

The degree of loyalty by the different audiences (citizens, trade partners, international consumers of the country's goods and services, international organisations, political partners, tourists, foreign investors, etc.) is the other key component of the nation country equity, so it is necessary to develop specific programmes to strengthen this loyalty.

Securing internal commitment to a country brand (by public authorities, the private industry and the population) is a key aspect to project its image that has been often set aside.

Indirect assets like the perceptions of a country image may not coincide with its actual image. Nevertheless, a negative image may be an exact reflection of real problems. Positive or negative stereotypes may be reproduced in books, films,

Graph 2. Nation brand equity model based on brand assets

Font: *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issue, Practice* (Keith Dinnie).

▲ Generated assets do not occur automatically but they need to be created consciously.

music or other cultural forms of expression. Hence it is crucial to monitor and assess the image and perceptions of a country and manage them effectively.

As far as disseminated assets are concerned, countries can nominate certain individuals and celebrities to act as brand ambassadors. A key factor in doing so is making sure that they actually represent the personality of the country and the positive attributes the nation brand shall project. Brand ambassadors are also a very effective strategy in terms of cost for countries having limited resources for marketing and promoting their brand. Further, expatriates can be regarded as an already existing network of potential brand ambassadors waiting to be activated.

Finally, brand exports can play an important role in building the reputation of a country abroad (Italian fashion, Scottish whisky, Japanese elec-

tronics, Chilean wines, etc.). Exports are a key asset in the nation brand equity, so countries should make sure that their foreign promotion agency has the appropriate resources to meet the targets.

To conclude, it can be said that the brand value concept can be applied to the context of country brands and that there are different sources and metrics of this brand value, including internal and external assets.

Countries can nominate certain individuals and celebrities to act as brand ambassadors, making sure that they actually represent the personality of the country and the positive attributes the nation brand shall project.

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